

Characterization

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Identify methods of characterization.
- Analyze characterization to make inferences about characters.

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

You will need photocopies for students of:

- **Student Lesson Summary**, p. 19
- **Teaching Model**, from *The Cricket in Times Square*, p. 20
- **Graphic Organizer**, Characterization, p. 21
- **Practice Worksheets**, Levels A and B, pp. 22–23
- **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 24

Teach

1. **Characterization:** Distribute the **Lesson Summary**. Preview the **Academic Vocabulary**, stressing that **characterization** is the technique a writer uses to create and develop characters.
2. **Teaching Characterization:** Use the **Lesson Summary** to review the four ways a writer can develop a character. Review the methods as follows:
 - **Direct Comment:** In the first example in the **Lesson Summary**, the narrator directly tells you that Candida is a liar.
 - **Physical Description:** In the second example, the narrator states that “finely-tailored clothes hung perfectly on George’s body.” You learn that George is neat, that he may have money, and that he is in good shape.
 - **Character’s Speech, Action, and Thoughts:** In the third example, you learn through Amy’s behavior that she is conflicted, ambitious, and possibly dishonest.
 - **What Others Think:** In the final example, you learn about Amy, through what Nick thinks. He thinks she is lazy and annoying. She may have cheated a lot.
3. **Using Inferences:** Explain that writers often describe characters indirectly. The writer provides clues about a character’s traits and expects the reader to make an educated guess, or **inference**.
 - To show students an example of inference, write the sentence on the board: “*Most teachers see my brilliance,*” *Sherman said with his chin raised.*
 - Ask students to think about the way Sherman talks and behaves.
 - Elicit Sherman’s traits: *conceited, arrogant, outgoing, school-aged.*
 - Explain that these traits, or qualities, are reasonably inferred by the reader.
4. **Guided Practice:** Distribute the **Teaching Model**, from *The Cricket in Times Square* by George Selden, along with the **Graphic Organizer**. Explain that the scene is at Bellini’s newsstand in Times Square, a busy subway stop in New York. Have a volunteer read the passage aloud. Then tell students to use the **Graphic Organizer** to fill in the character web for Mario. You can also have them create a web for Mama Bellini.

CHARACTERIZATION, CONTINUED

QUICK CHECK. Use the following scenarios to check students’ ability to make inferences about character.

- **Physical description.** Ask students what they would infer about a character, who has “food stains dotting his shirt and a scraggly beard.” (*male, sloppy, helpless.*)
- **Character’s speech, actions, thoughts.** A character slips a hundred dollar bill into the donation box. Ask students to make inferences about the character. (*wealthy, generous, spontaneous, or showy.*)
- **Other characters’ speech, actions, thoughts.** Ask students what they would infer about Darryl from this sentence: “Regina felt, once again, that Darryl’s teasing had gone too far.” (*Darryl is mean.*)
(*Most would say the character was heroic.*)

Sample Answers: Graphic Organizer

Mario (center oval)

Direct Comment: “Mario’s happiness fell in ruins.”

Physical Description: *blank*

Character’s Speech, Action, Thoughts: *so busy feeding cricket that does not see parents; picks up cricket gently; “Crickets are good luck.”; wants to keep it for a pet. (Mario is kind, enthusiastic, nurturing, gentle, sensitive, and a bit superstitious.)*

Practice and Apply

Practice activities involving characterization appear on pp. 22–23.

- Assign **Practice Worksheet A** to students who need more structured activities.
- Assign **Practice Worksheet B** to grade-level and above-level students.

Answer Key: Practice Worksheet A

1. *d* 2. *a* 3. *c* 4. *b*

Answer Key: Practice Worksheet B

1. *b* 2. *a* 3. *c* 4. *d*

Assess and Reteach

Use these guidelines to determine if students need the **Reteaching Worksheet**.

- **Practice Worksheet A:** Students should have four correct answers. If not, they will benefit from **Reteaching**.
- **Practice Worksheet B:** Students should have three answers correct, or two correct and two partially correct. More errors indicate a need for **Reteaching**.

For students who need reteaching, review the **Student Lesson Summary**. Focus on the definitions and relate them to the examples. Brainstorm one or two new examples with students. Then, have them complete the **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 24.

Answer Key: Reteaching Worksheet

1. *a* 2. *d* 3. *c, b* 4. *a, c* 5. *c* 6. sample: *violent, angry* 7. sample: *greedy, wild, rude*